

by Cynthia Pearson photographs by Sam Gray produced by Catherine Kramer

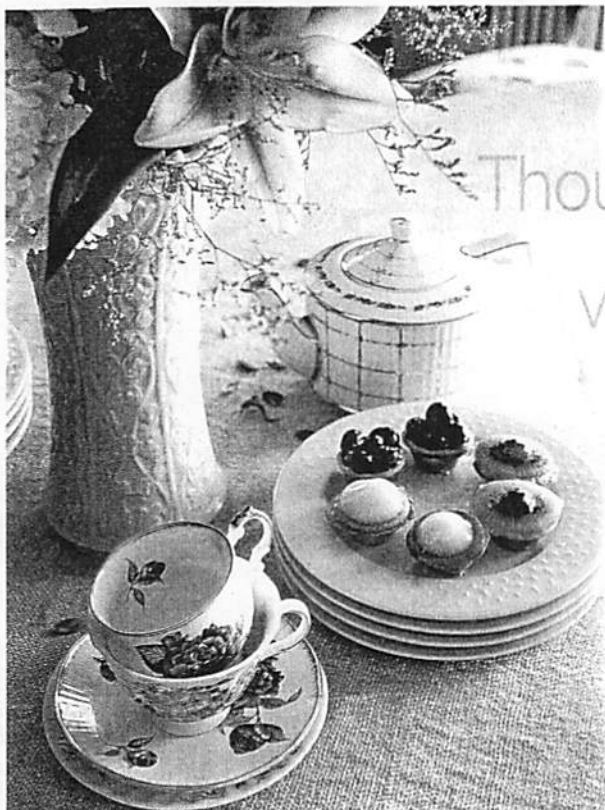
rooms that soothe

Susanne Caliendo grew up at her mother's side, helping Mom create a welcoming, comfortable family home. Now Susanne's the mom, and putting together a beautiful home—a stage for her family's life—is her ever-constant expression of love, comfort, and joy.

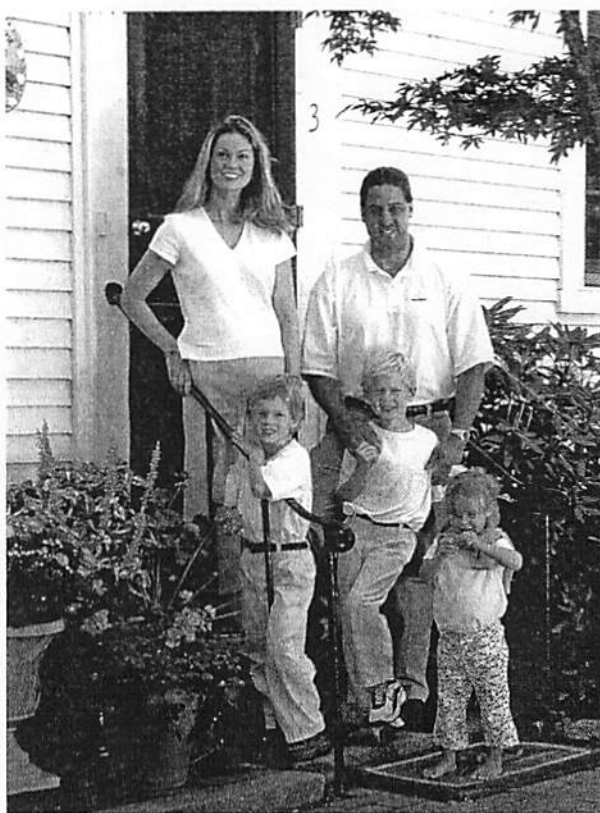


TEAR ROOMS AND GARDENS, APRIL 2002

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Though rich in tradition,
the house is filled
with a youthful spirit.



Phil and Susanne Caliendo's 1833 Greek Revival home in Duxbury, Massachusetts, needed some love and care when they moved in four years ago. Originally a bank, the structure had long since been remade into a duplex before the couple purchased it. Then, their thoughtful renovations gave the building a third life. The result? The Calientos claimed a top decorating prize in our Home Improvement Contest. More important, their home is the welcoming, stay-awhile place that they dreamed it could be.

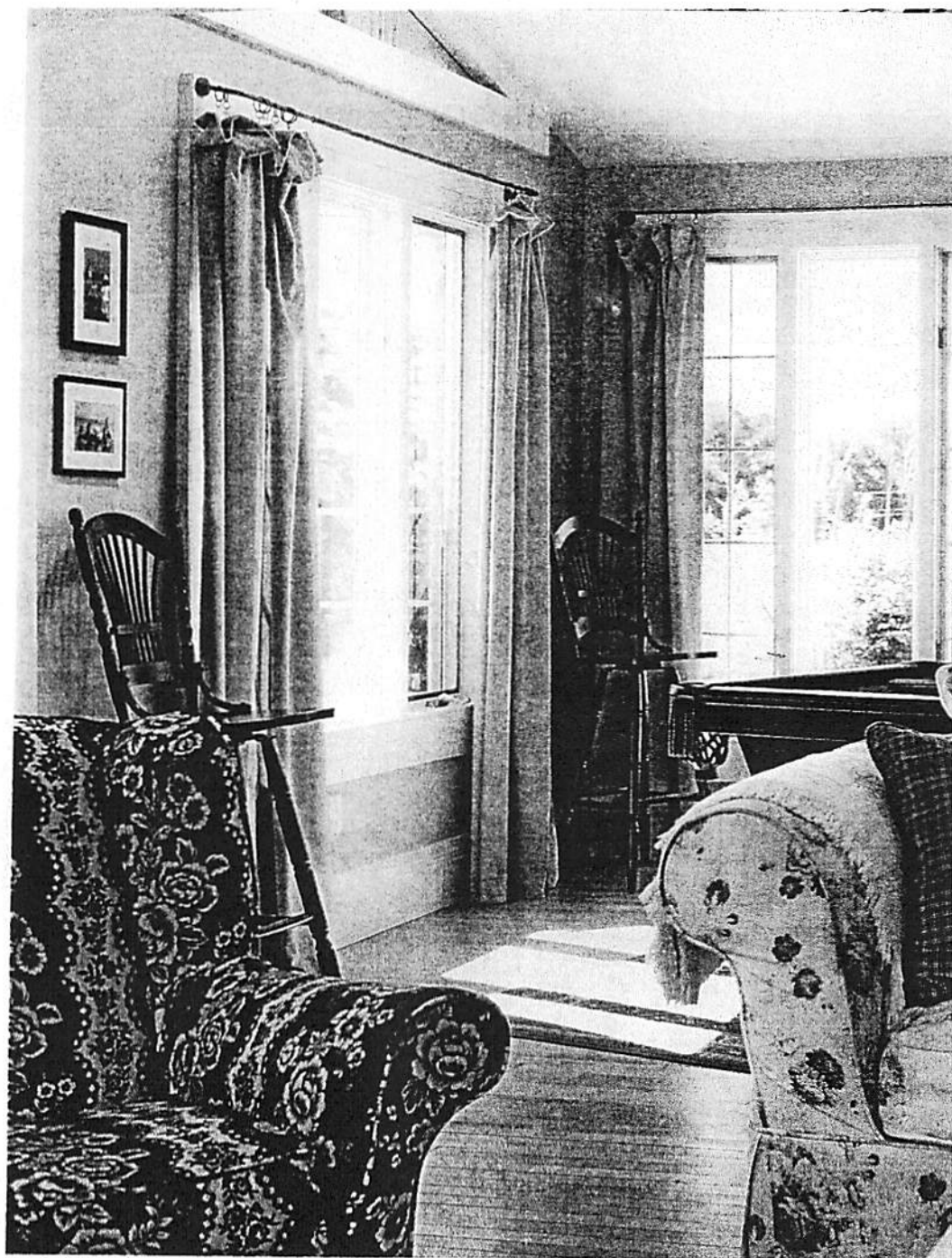
Susanne is the family's decorator. She adores the task, and Phil and the kids are her trusting, enthusiastic fan club. "We spend so much time here, as a family and with friends. I want a home that's inviting and comfortable," she says. For her, that means a look that leans toward traditional, "though I like finding things that are a little unexpected."

The Calientos step outside to Duxbury Bay and the Bluefish River, where Ben, 5, Drew, 6, and Eva, 2, like joining Mom and Dad to fish off a paddleboat and hunt for crabs. Indoors, red walls, a massive Oriental rug, and an imposing black marble fireplace set the proper traditional tone for the family's formal dining room. But look closer and you'll see some of Susanne's lighthearted touches: a sparkling crystal pineapple atop the chandelier, dancing ball fringe on toile jabots, and a sprinkling of roses on chair seats.

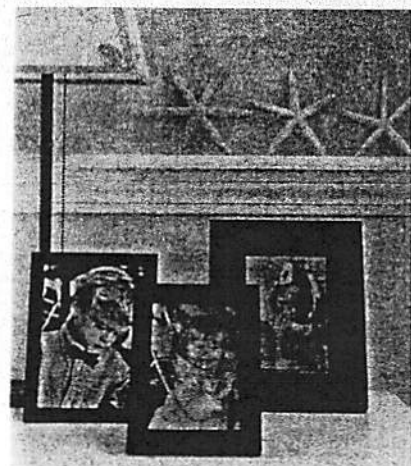


Toasty mocha walls and ocher velvet draperies frame magnificent sunsets on one end of a living room designed for conversation or play. The game side and its bar-height furnishings flow easily into a putty-and-peach-hued fireside sitting area. Red tones—on the pool table's felt and the sitting area's upholstery—help link the areas.

Boat models, paintings, beach finds, and shell wreaths give the living room a waterside ambience. The ladybug print valance at the fireplace window (*far right*) is just pure fun.



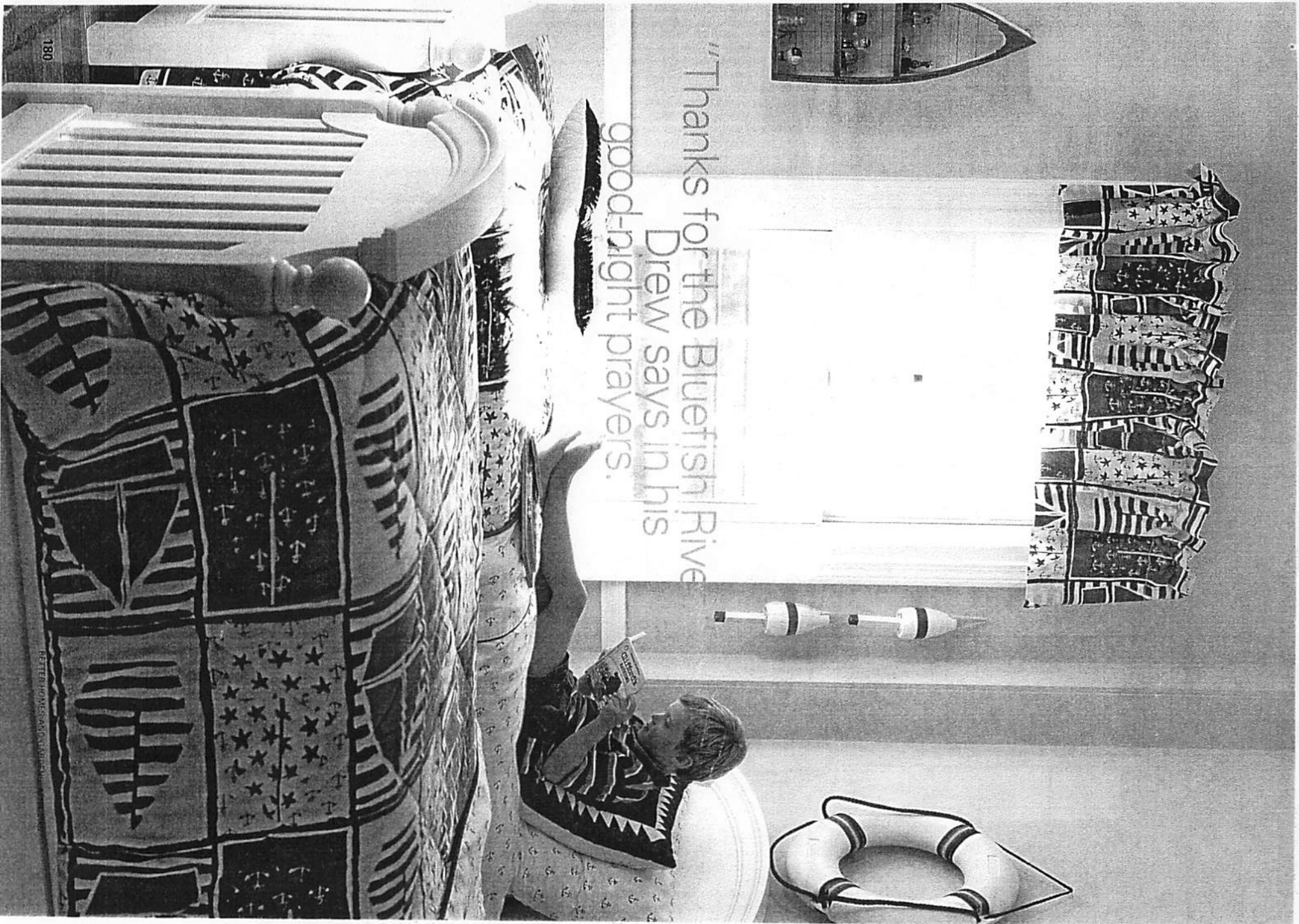
Critical structural changes were required before Susanne could work her magic. Rooms had to be gutted and entryways widened to reintegrate chopped-up spaces. Work took two long years of living with construction dust, but gave Susanne time to perfect her decorating scheme. Throughout the house, old furnishings mix with new, and dark woods blend with white-painted pieces. Rooms are woven together with a color scheme of restful pastels punctuated by vibrant red and raspberry. Window treatments are purposefully minimal to play up the exquisite views of boats cruising the bay.





This living room—a big space that's half billiard room, half fireside seating area—is where the family can be found most often. "This is where we hang out; we play, read, and watch TV here," Susanne explains. For some couples, a pool table in the living room could have been grounds for divorce. But not for Susanne and Phil, who love the way the room works for entertaining. "In some places, the guys end up in the basement and the women in the kitchen. But here," she says, "everyone ends up together." For quiet time or when the extended family gathers for holidays, there's always the parlor (see *page 174*).





"Thanks for the Bluefish River
Drew says in his
good-night prayers."

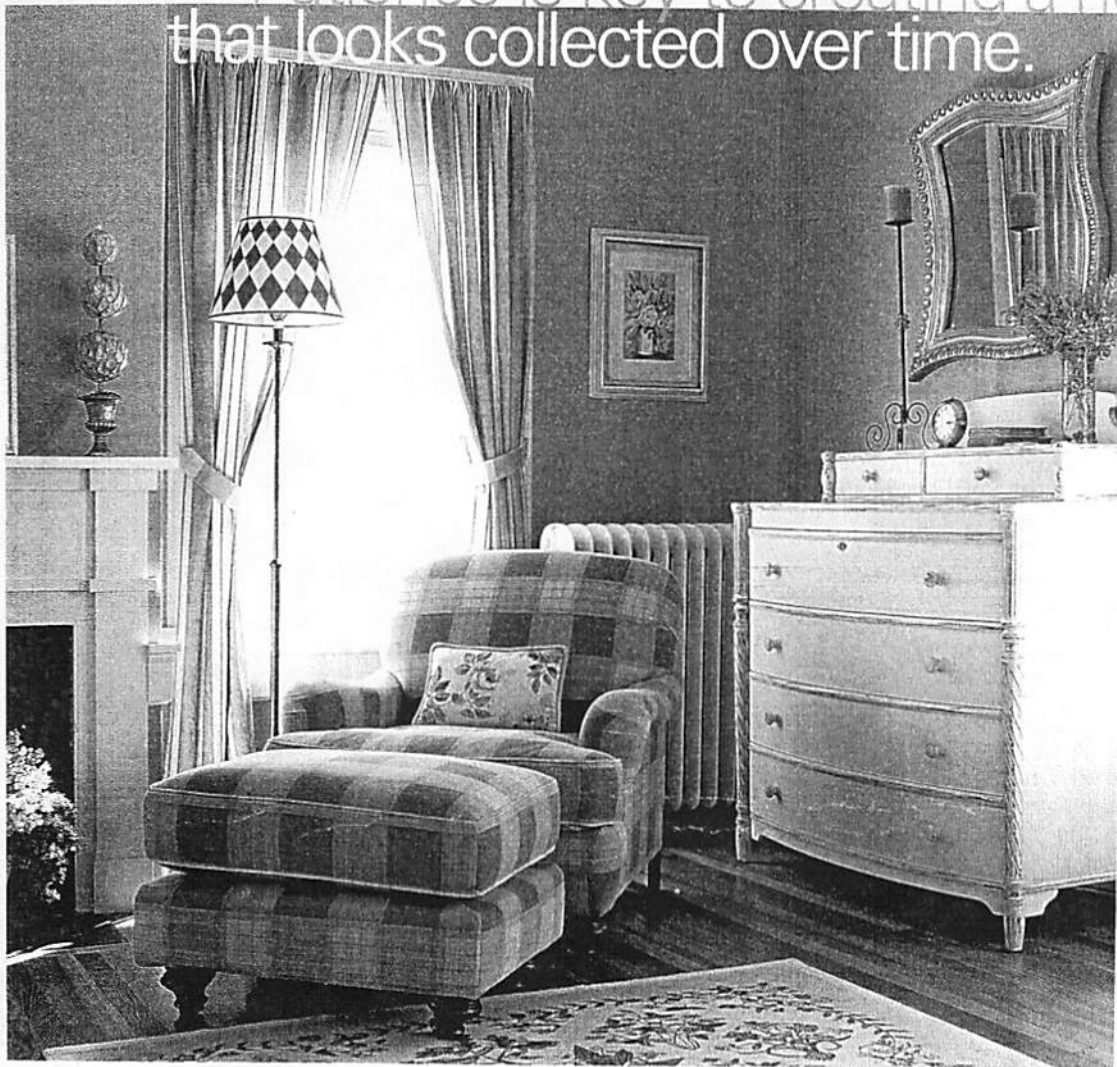
Ben (*left*) and Drew love to watch boats on the bay from their room, so a nautical theme came naturally. Susanne started with sky blue walls and boat-themed bedroom coordinates, then decked the walls with real buoys and life preservers.

Eva's floaty pink and white room (*right*) is grounded with a rug and toy box (filled with dress-ups!) in deeper pinks and yellow. The rocker was once dark, but Susanne had a local artist give it a decorative dress of white and pastels.



Susanne isn't fussy about where she finds things, or ideas. Eva's ruffled pink sheers (*above*) are a tag sale score made long before the little girl arrived. The white-painted sofa table in the parlor? It's an estate-sale find that filled many roles for Susanne before its present duty. Twisted fringe finishes a few parlor chairs; that idea came from a Disney hotel lobby. "I'm a total detail person," Susanne admits. Whether it's frilly fringe or the right-sized wooden boat shelf to display Ben's action figures, Susanne enjoys making things interesting and meaningful. The dining room chandelier, for instance, features a crystal pineapple that symbolizes welcome and echoes a similar chandelier—and sentiment—in the foyer.

Patience is key to creating a home that looks collected over time.



A soothing sage green—not too feminine, Susanne says—takes the lead in the couple's bedroom. Creamy distressed furnishings and a plaid armchair and ottoman give the room a restorative quality that's so welcome at the end of the day.

Susanne likes things "a little different." A swervy mirror adds sass. The strict geometry on the harlequin lampshades keeps the room from looking overly soft.



Phil and Susanne look around their home and remark that they haven't had to buy much; they've been lucky beneficiaries when parents and relatives have downsized households. "Everywhere I look here, I see things that have been given to us by people we love—things that remind us of good times we've had, places we've been, and fun things our family enjoys," Susanne remarks. "It's cheering." When they do invest in furnishings, Susanne is particular: "I look for comfortable pieces that won't go out of style." The Queen Anne dining set was the couple's first purchase; the cushy living room upholstery still is attractive after years of little feet climbing on and off. Rather than being cast aside someday, these pieces more likely will be handed on to the Caliendo children—along with a knack for creating an inviting family home. 🏠